

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EUR-08

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P R 161834Z JAN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9918  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS

S E C R E T ROME 888

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1  
TAGS: IT, UK, US  
SUBJECT: BRITISH VIEWS ON ITALIAN CRISIS

1. BRITISH EMBOFF CALLED AT EMBASSY JANUARY 13 TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S STATEMENT OF JANUARY 12 AND TO LEAVE WITH US A COPY OF AN FCO TALKING PAPER ON THE ITALIAN SITUATION WHICH HAD EARLIER BEEN HANDED TO AMBASSADOR BREWSTER. (WE ASSUME THAT AMEMBASSY LONDON HAS ALREADY TRANSMITTED THE CO PAPER TO THE DEPARTMENT.) FROM THE DISCUSSION, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THERE IS LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BRITISH EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION HERE AND OUR OWN.

2. BRITISH EMBOFF OBSERVED THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAD APPROACHED THE BRITISH EMBASSY WASHINGTON TO SOLICIT POSSIBLE BRITISH STATEMENT REGARDING A POSSIBLE COMMUNIST ENTRY INTO AN ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN, WHO WAS TRAVELLING IN PAKISTAN, ASKED THAT THE VIEWS OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY AT ROME BE ASCERTAINED

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BEFORE DECIDING ON A COURSE OF ACTION. EMBOFF STATED THAT HIS AMBASSADOR HAD REPLIED TO THIS REQUEST BY INDICATING THAT A BRITISH STATEMENT WOULD NOT, IN HIS VIEW, HAVE A MEASURABLE EFFECT HERE IN ITALY. IN MAKING HIS RECOMMENDATION, THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR REPORTEDLY HAD IN MIND THE ADDITIONAL FACT THAT THE LABOR PARTY IS SPLIT ON ITS ASSESSMENT OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY, WITH A FULL SIX

MEMBERS OF THE LABOR CABINET LEANING TO THE VIEW THAT THE PCI HAS GONE A LONG WAY IN DEMONSTRATING ITS DEMOCRATIC CREDENTIALS. IN HIS MESSAGE, THE AMBASSADOR DID RECOMMEND THAT THE FCO AND THE BRITISH EMBASSY ROME, IF AND WHEN QUESTIONED ABOUT THE SUBJECT, DRAW ATTENTION TO FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN'S COMMENTS ON EUROCOMMUNISM MADE DURING A SPEECH LAST NOVEMBER.

3. EMBOFF QUESTIONED HIS BRITISH COUNTERPART WHETHER THERE HAVE BEEN ANY RECENT CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN BRITISH OFFICIALS AND ITALIAN POLITICIANS REGARDING THE COMMUNIST QUESTION. IN DEEP CONFIDENCE, OUR SOURCE SAID CALLAGHAN AND ANDREOTTI HAD DISCUSSED THE QUESTION LAST SEPTEMBER AT WHICH TIME ANDREOTTI SAID THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WOULD NOT FORM A COALITION WITH THE PCI PRIOR TO NDO NATIONAL ELECTIONS. SOURCE ADDED THAT BRITISH AMBASSADOR HAD DISCUSSED THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION WITH DC PRESIDENT MORO WITHIN THE LAST TEN DAYS, ALTHOUGH THE QUESTION OF THE BRITISH ATTITUDE TO PCI PARTICIPATION IN AN ITALIAN GOVERNMENT WAS NOT RAISED DIRECTLY.

4. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE DISCUSSION, EMBOFF SUGGESTED THAT THE BRITISH MIGHT WISH TO NOTE IN STRICTLY PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS, INCLUDING PARTY TO PARTY CONTACTS, THEIR CONCERN ABOUT A FURTHER LEFTWARD DRIFT IN ITALY IF THEY FELT THAT THEY COULD NOT MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT. BRITISH  
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EMBOFF INDICATED THAT HE WOULD DISCUSS THIS POSSIBILITY WITHIN HIS EMBASSY WITH A VIEW TOWARDS GETTING INSTRUCTIONS FROM LONDON. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE EMBASSY'S CONTACTS WITH THE DC ARE LIMITED, THAT THE BRITISH CONSERVATIVES AND THE DC DO NOT HAVE PARTICULARLY WARM RELATIONS, AND THAT THE LABOR PARTY'S TIES ARE BEST WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS (PARTY SECRETARY ROMITA), RATHER THAN WITH THE SOCIALISTS--HIS WAY OF POINTING OUT THAT EVEN HERE THE BRITISH CONTRIBUTION MIGHT WELL BE LIMITED. GARDNER

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